

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The habit of preachers today is to address their people as though they were all Christians and just need instruction...men and women are being treated as saved who never knew they were lost.”

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The Wisdom of God and the Foolishness of Man – Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians

Part 2 – We Have Everything in Christ

February 11, 2024

Sermon Text: 1 Cor 1:1-8

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ,
His only begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

from there he shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

.....

1Co 1:1-9 Paul, called as an

apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, (2) To the church of God which is at Corinth, **to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling,**

with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: (3) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(4) I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, (5) **that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,** (6) even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, (7) **so that you are not lacking in any gift,** awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, (8) who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Apostle Paul very typically identifies his major theme right in the opening words of a letter. And that is exactly what we have here.

As we will see as we move through this epistle, even in just the first two chapters, Corinth was a church that was suffering from *conformity to the world around it*. This conformity included:

- Pride – this was the root sin
- Seeking “deeper” wisdom – very probably introducing Greek philosophy into the gospel of Christ – syncretism.
- Creating various “schools” of thought rather than seeing the unity of Christ and His Church
- Rating the apostles by the world’s criteria – greatness of oratory, etc.

Paul sets out then in this letter to show these often foolish Corinthians *the greatness of their salvation in Christ and who they now were as a result*. Sanctified! Saints by calling! In need of nothing more than Christ. And, of

course, these are the things the Lord wants us to get hold of as well.

Saints and Members of the Church Universal

1Co 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Both of Paul's major themes are condensed right here in one verse:

- Called to be saints
- Together with all who call upon the name of the Lord

Holiness and Unity. The Corinthians were lacking in both because they were still thinking like "mere men" as Paul puts it. Like the Greek mindset and worldview which surrounded and infected them. *We face the very same fight as well.* We live in an unholy, pride-filled and selfish world which pits one party against

another. As someone once put it,

"...a ship is in the water, but the water must never get into the ship."

Well, there was quite a lot of water in the Corinthian's ship and Paul is setting out to see that it is pumped out.

Sanctified, saints by calling. Every Christian has heard the voice of the Good Shepherd – *Come and follow Me.* The powerful Word of God has come to us, if we are born again, and *called us out of darkness into light.* This word "call" is a common and vital word in the New Testament. The Christian is a new, created being, created by that same word of power that said "Let there be light."

When that mighty Word comes to the Lord's elect, *they are going to come! That Word is "irresistible."* [TULIP]. His Spirit is in us, having regenerated us, and begins to lead us in the Way Christ would have us go. At the same time, the world, the flesh, and the devil raise themselves up against the Spirit

and the battle rages. As we proceed through this epistle we are going to see example after example of ways in which the Corinthians were still being conformed to the world – its ways and its mindset.

Challenge to us – In what ways are WE yielding to the pressure to conform to this world in which we live? Christ’s people are called, called out of the world and called to be holy, to be DIFFERENT. And the world is going to hate you for being different. You will be accused of being a fool. Are you yielding to this pressure, or are you following Christ?

With all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours

We just recited the Apostles’ Creed together and in it we said that we believe in *the holy catholic (universal) church and communion of the saints*. By this we mean what Paul said here – *with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours*. The Church

universal. We are one with EVERY Christian in every place in this world, and in heaven with Christ. The body of Christ is ONE. Paul will go on to develop this doctrine and drive home its importance, admonishing the Corinthians for this terrible business of separating into their own little “churches.” Paul had instructed the church in Ephesus in the very same truth:

Eph 4:1-6 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, (3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

See it? One, one, one. All, all, all.

Now, take care in this. Paul is NOT

teaching us some *ecumenicity* which is of man's creation. He is not promoting some kind of *organizational* oneness like we see so often being pushed in the visible church today. No. This unity is the *unity of the Spirit*, created by the Holy Spirit between Christ and all of His true people, and between those true people themselves. Our task is to maintain and preserve it *and we are to be diligent to do so.*

The primary, typical evil which quenches this unity among us is PRIDE. SELF. The Diotrephes syndrome:

3Jn 1:9-10 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, **who likes to put himself first**, does not acknowledge our authority. (10) So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, **he refuses to welcome the brothers**, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

The church at Corinth, as we are

going to see, was deeply infected by this terrible sin of pride and it *was unworthy of who they were now in Christ – sanctified, saints by calling.* Called OUT of the world.

I was reading a historical novel recently and in it there is a character who was half native American in his lineage. He hated that fact. He did all he could to hide it from people, even having some plastic surgery on his face to hide the subtlest feature which reflected who he was.

The Corinthians, and many professing Christians today, were yielding to the world's notion that the gospel is foolishness, and that anyone who believed it and lived in light of it, was a fool. They had a choice to make – were they going to follow Christ unashamedly, or were they going to be ashamed of Christ and conform themselves to the world.

We must make that same choice!

I wonder, is there anyone listening this morning who claims to be a Christian but who in fact is

ashamed of Christ? Who craves the world's approval? If so, listen very carefully:

Mar 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

In contrast:

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

If the Corinthians were going to live as saints, as people called out of this world into Christ's church, then they were going to have to pay a price:

1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

If you are going to follow Christ in

this world, then you are going to be seen by the world as a fool. The gospel you live by is foolishness to the worldling and it is hated by the world. Are you willing to be hated? How does the world see you? As one of its own, or as an alien? Are you welcome in the City of Destruction, or are you someone who like Bunyan's Christian, set out on pilgrimage from that City all the while being mocked by its citizens? A Book in you hand, and a burden on your back?

Examine yourself carefully. When you get out of bed in the morning, what is your goal? What drives your actions and thinking? Approval of the world, or Christ? These are the things Paul was putting right in front of these Corinthians.

With all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. The Body of Christ, the true Church, consists of ALL people in EVERY place in this world and in heaven, who call upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Who confess His name before men without shame. Who

look to Him alone for their salvation.

Consider carefully now, *true ecumenicity*. True oneness. What are the qualifications for membership in the true Church? *To have been called by Christ, to have called upon Him alone for salvation, to be one of His true people. To be joined to Christ by the Spirit of Christ.*

Now, *how many Christ's are there? How many gospels are there? How many churches are there?* You know the answer – ONE, ONE, ONE.

Does the visible Christian church today and in ages past always reflect this Unity of the Spirit? You know the answer to that question as well.

The great evangelist and preacher George Whitefield back in the 1700's – was harshly and cruelly criticized – regarded as a fool – by his fellow clergymen in the Church of England. And largely this was due to the fact that he saw that the true Church was not only the

Church of England! He said that the one thing he was concerned with in cooperating with someone in ministry was – *were they truly born again. Did they know Christ? Were they genuine members of the true Church? Was the gospel they believed and preached the true gospel?* If they were, then they were his fellows, his brothers and sisters in Christ.

In just about any community you will find some “ministerial association.” Almost always these things are based upon the minimization or even denial of the gospel. It doesn't matter really whether Rome's “gospel” is held to or the “gospel” of the liberal which denies the Word of God, the main thing is *unity. Oneness*. These monstrosities are not something we are to join with. Even if we are criticized for being “divisive.”

But where we find real Christians, people who truly are saints by His calling, *we are to welcome them and to confess our belief in ONE universal church and the communion of the saints.*

“with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours”

How has this worked itself out here in this church? *The remnant is small. The remnant is scattered.* We welcome all here to truly know Christ, and the Lord has connected us with many others *“with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.* Those of you who follow this church from a distance – *you who call on the name of Jesus Christ – you are part of the Church of God just as we are. You are our brothers and sisters in Christ.*

Paul is going to admonish the Corinthians –

1Co 1:10-11 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. (11) For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

Now, when Paul says “that you all agree,” he is not promoting some fake unity. Their agreement is agreement in Christ. In the true gospel. But they were, in their pride and in their conformity to the world, dividing up into various parties and were quarreling with one another.

Their divisions, as we will see in more detail later, were not based upon the essentials of the gospel. Like the Greek philosophical schools around them, they were dividing over “nuances” and “personalities.” It was all driven by this terrible pride. This same pride drives division so often in churches today. This is a subject so large that it is difficult to know where to begin in discussing it!

- Should we use musical instruments in worship or not?
- Should we only sing the Psalms?
- Was Luther or Calvin right in the understanding of the Lord’s Supper?
- Are we to baptize infants or

only those who knowingly confess Christ?

- What version of the Bible will we use?
- The ARBCA terrible division over whether God has emotions or not.
- Then there is the division created over preference for a particular preacher or personality

And on and on this sad list could go. The thing is all fueled by sin. By pride, just as it was in Corinth. When we act this way, we are acting as if we are “mere men,” people who don’t belong to Christ at all. And we cause the name of Christ to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. How often have you heard a non-Christian say “you guys can’t even agree among yourselves. How can you tell me what God says?”?

Now, with all of this said, let’s be sure of one thing – THE TRUE CHURCH IS UNITED. THERE IS A UNITY OF THE SPIRIT. And sometimes these divisions happen because of that unity –

1Jn 2:18-19 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

And again:

1Co 11:18-19 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, (19) for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

Often then, when there is this division, it is the Lord sifting out the chaff from the wheat. This kind of division is necessary – it “must be” as Paul puts it. God’s truth separates “those who are genuine” from counterfeits. Paul will write in his second letter to them:

2Co 6:14-17 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,

But that is not the kind of division Paul is addressing here. This party spirit at Corinth was a division that was sinful, it was a division that was separating real believers from one another.

We must humble ourselves and reject this terrible sin of pride which seeks to exalt self. It is in a way I suppose, the very root of sin. It is the sin of Satan who always

works to exalt himself.

Listen again to Paul in writing to the Ephesians:

Eph 4:11-13 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, (12) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (13) **until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

And again

1Co 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

None of us have arrived. The prideful man claims he has – that he knows, that he sees "face to face" now. But that is not going to happen in this present life.

It has always intrigued me how

genuine Christians, try as they might even with sincerity, have not been able to arrive at unity in regard to the ordinance of baptism. Too often this difference has been a source of sin within the true church. And I think that the Lord allows these kinds of differences to humble us – to test us.

We are a reformed Baptist church. We practice believer's baptism. But this church consists of members who differ on this subject. Many of the teachers of the church that we use regularly – R.C. Sproul, J.C. Ryle, virtually all the Reformers – Luther, Calvin – held to infant covenant baptism. But Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Charles Spurgeon – didn't. And as I said, I find it intriguing that this difference among people who truly loved the Lord, who studied and preached the Word of God diligently, could not come to agreement on this subject.

Why? Let me suggest an answer. *Because the Lord Jesus Christ wants to see how we handle such differences. Will we humbly acknowledge that we have not yet*

arrived and perfect knowledge? Will we love one another in Christ in spite of these differences? Or will we, like the prideful Corinthians, form factions and quarrel with one another?

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope to which we are all looking for. One holy, universal church consisting of all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord and theirs. These are the things we are going to be hearing the Apostle Paul drive home to these Corinthians – and to us. For His glory, let's be sure we hear and learn well.